

Mayor's Update



Webster Woods Saved

City Councilors voted unanimously last night to save in perpetuity approximately 17.4 acres of forest affectionately known as Webster Woods.

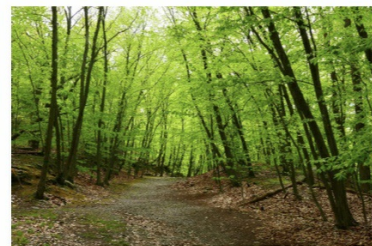
The first phase of saving Webster Woods is now complete. Webster Woods, part of approximately 150 acres of Newton's largest contiguous parcel of open space which stretches along both sides of Hammond Pond Parkway, is permanently preserved and protected with a conservation restriction so it can never be developed.

Eminent domain is not something I take lightly, but I am certain that preserving this forest for our children, grandchildren and for centuries to come is the right thing to do.

What's next?

I will sign the City Council Orders tomorrow morning. Newton's City Charter requires a 20-day waiting period before any legislative measure can take effect. That means we will record the Order of Taking with the South Middlesex Registry of Deeds by the end of December. At that point, the City of Newton will own the land. A check for \$15.2 million will be cut and issued to Boston College within 60 days of recording the Order of Taking.

We anticipate Boston College will challenge our acquisition and the value of the land. We are prepared. We know the issue may be in the court system for a number of years, but the land's value will be as of the date we file the Order of Taking. How will we pay for a potentially larger acquisition price or additional legal fees? We will apply to the Community Preservation Committee for additional funds to pay these possible added costs if necessary.



I'm proud to have worked with so many residents, City Councilors, City staff members, the Community Preservation Committee, the Conservation Commission, the Webster Woods Advisory Panels, and the Friends of Webster Woods to save Webster Woods.



Northland Approved

After years of planning, public hearings and revisions, the City Council last night approved the Northland development by a vote of 17 to 7.

Councilors rezoned the 22.6 acres of largely vacant mill, retail and office buildings and extensive parking lots at

the end of Needham Street at Oak Street. They also approved a special permit to create 800 units of housing, ground-floor retail, restaurant space, restored office uses at the historic mill, and a variety of public open space including a central green for events and a new community spray park.

The special permit as voted by the City Council includes:

- 120 units of affordable housing for people earning up to 80 percent of the region's area median income (AMI) at an average of 65 percent AMI, and an additional 20 units affordable to people earning up to 110 percent AMI. All these units will be kept affordable in perpetuity.
- \$1.5 million toward construction of a new Countryside School.
- \$5 million toward transportation improvements in the vicinity of the project, including bicycle and pedestrian safety upgrades (e.g., trying to extend the Greenway to the Green Line in Newton Highlands and/or Elliot Station), Upper Falls village enhancements and traffic calming, traffic safety, and signal coordination.
- \$1.5 million toward Newton's sewer system.
- Limiting vehicle trips by employees and residents of Northland. The transportation plan includes a free, electric shuttle running every 10 minutes, 16 hours a day, seven days a week to the Newton Highland T Station. The City's Planning Department monitors compliance against a standard and requires changes from Northland if the system does not meet the desired traffic levels.
- A spray park/splash pad on an 11,000-square-foot area by the Upper Falls Greenway with 25 to 30 spray heads. Newton currently has only two small spray pads (at Burr Park and behind Family Access), while Brookline has fourteen, and Waltham has nine.
- Significant commitments to sustainability, including LEED certification for the entire site, solar panels, rainwater harvesting, electric-only appliances, 66 electric vehicle charging stations and extensive bicycle parking.
- Retail space subsidized by the developer dedicated to locally-owned, non-formula merchants.

This has been a long and sometimes controversial process and I am very aware that some residents are still concerned with the potential impact on traffic, the immediate

neighborhood, and our schools.

At the same time, the City Council made sure the project addressed our need for a housing designed and priced for a variety of types of people, buildings built to high sustainability levels, substantial green and open space, a frequent shuttle that connects to public transit, financial penalties if traffic exceeds benchmarks, a good mix of “live, work, play” spaces and a monetary commitment to both the neighborhood elementary school, Countryside, and our sewer system.

Yes, this is development. But, with the tremendous amount of revisions required by the City Council, I think it is not overdevelopment.



Teamsters Contract Settled

Good news. The City reached a two-year agreement with Teamsters Local 25 which represents 167 women and men who work in our Department of Public Works, Building Department and the Parks, Recreation and Culture Department. This includes the people who have been out plowing our streets through the night, and those who maintain our village centers, our roads, parks, trees and buildings. (A huge thank you to the many people who worked overnight two nights in a row and who are still out plowing, shoveling and clearing.)

The union ratified the agreement yesterday afternoon. This contract runs through FY2020.

A New Home for our Preschoolers

The Newton Early Childhood Program (NECP), the City’s integrated pre-school, will start the 2021 school year in its new home at 687 Washington Street thanks to an investment of \$12.3 million approved by the City Council last night.

The Newton Early Childhood Program is exceptional, offering a comprehensive range of services. Each class is staffed with a Masters level teacher and two to four teacher assistants. In addition, speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists and behavior therapists are involved in our classrooms. Our professional staff also includes board certified behavior analysts (BCBAs), vision and mobility specialists, a school psychologist, a social worker, a school nurse, and a physical education teacher. Classrooms include students who are typically developing and others with special needs.

Construction to renovate the former Horace Mann School for the NECP will begin in May. The renovations include moving the entrance from Watertown Street to Albemarle Road, improving accessibility by installing an elevator, adding a new roof and HVAC system, reconfiguring and adding classrooms, and turning the cafeteria and traditional gymnasium into a space for occupational and physical therapy as well a play space for the three to five year olds.

NECP is now housed at 150 Jackson Road, the former Aquinas College. Once NECP moves, 150 Jackson Road will be renovated as the new home for the Lincoln-Elliot Elementary School, and Lincoln-Elliot will become the swing space for use during future school renovations with Countryside, Franklin and Ward slated as our next major

projects.

Warmly,

Ruthanne

P.S. Today is Giving Tuesday. Even though our local event to showcase Newton charities had to be cancelled because of the weather, please consider donating to one of our non-profits that do so much for so many.

P.P.S. You can also donate to the Newton Food Drive—the city’s three pantries are asking for breakfast foods. Donations will be collected through Friday, Dec. 27 at City Hall and more than 30 other locations across Newton. A complete list of the sites can be found [here](#).

P.P.P.S. Cradles to Crayons provides children with everyday essentials they need to thrive. They are hosting Newton-wide Collect and Sort events from December 2 to 14. Drop off new and “like new” childrens’ items in the Cradles to Crayons bin in the lobby of City Hall or in the storage unit at the Scandinavian Cultural Center (206 Waltham Street, West Newton) . You can also join us to quality check, sort, and package donations on Tuesday, December 10, from 1:00 to 3:30 p.m. at Newton City Hall’s War Memorial Auditorium or on Saturday, December 14, from 10:00 a.m. to noon at the Scandinavian Cultural Center.

P.P.P.P.S. Join us in Nonantum this Sunday, Dec. 8 at 6:30 p.m. for the annual park lighting and sing-along at Coletti-Magni Park, 386 Watertown Street.

P.P.P.P.P.S Adopt a hydrant this winter. This storm wasn’t too bad, but help the Newton Fire Department keep Newton safe. Keep a 3-foot area around the hydrant clear to help Newton’s firefighters.

